

From the Chinese point of view, such measures help contain the dispute with the Philippines and ASEAN, prevent the entry of other parties (particularly major powers) into the issue, and open opportunities for China to expand its influence with these countries through high-level dialogues, including of military officials. To a certain extent, CBMs initiated by China, such as navy port calls and cross-training of military officers, have even helped the Philippines and the region accept China's legitimate stakes and role in the security of Southeast Asia.

From the Philippine perspective, dialogue with China, combined with actions actively asserting its opposition to China's occupation of Mischief Reef in bilateral and multilateral fora, helps keep international attention on the issue. This somewhat reduces the danger of China even more boldly taking unilateral actions to promote its claims.

The leadership that the Philippines has been forced to take within ASEAN in its dealings with China on this issue also enhances the strategic significance of the Philippines, particularly with China and possibly with the United States.

The process of resolving the territorial and maritime resource dispute is bound to be protracted. The confidence-building process, on the other hand, can achieve incremental progress, and if properly focussed, can also help keep the final resolution of the dispute on the agenda. In the meantime, it forces each side to justify to the other its policy and actions, emphasize the importance of compromise on a "win-win" solution, and help bind both parties to acceptable norms and principles of behaviour.